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### **This Grilling Season, Make Sure it's Only the Food That Gets Barbequed!**

Now that warmer weather is starting to show up, there's nothing like grilling your meals outside. The taste of grilled meats and vegetables can't be recreated anywhere else. However, grilling safety should be an important part of your outdoor cooking plans! Grill fires on residential properties result in an estimated average of 10 deaths, 100 injuries, and \$37 million in property loss each year according to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA).

Propane is the power source in 69 percent of all grill fires on residential properties according to the USFA. If using a propane grill, when is the last time you checked to make sure the connections are secure and the hoses are in good condition? According to the USFA leaks or breaks of containers or pipes account for 23 percent of all grill fires on residential properties. What about the integrity of the tank? Here's some great advice from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) on how to make sure your propane grill is fire safe and operating efficiently:

- Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year.
  - Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose.
  - A propane leak will release bubbles.
- If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble test, and there is no flame, turn off both the gas tank and the grill.
  - If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again.
  - If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.
- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department.
  - Do not move the grill.
  - If the flame goes out, turn the grill and gas off and wait at least 5 minutes before re-lighting it.

The NFPA also advises that charcoal grills also need to be used in a manner that reduces the risk of fire and burn injury. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel. They contain the fire and reduce the risk of embers escaping and potentially starting a fire on or near your home. If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire. Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources. There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. If using one of these devices, be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.

Whether using propane or charcoal, placement of your grill is just as important as having it in proper working order. Outdoors means outdoors! Never grill in a garage, shed or anywhere in your home. Grills should be placed at least 10 feet from any structures. Make sure the spot you choose is level to prevent the grill from tipping or falling over. The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches. If you live in an apartment or townhome, remember that grilling is not allowed on balconies or patios in any multiple family complex.

Once you light the fire, watch it! Never leave a grill unattended. Flare ups can occur in seconds. Children and pets should be kept well away from the grilling area.

After you are done grilling, and the grill has cooled down, clean it! Don't forget about the grease trays! They should be emptied and cleaned after each use. Avoiding grease build up means avoiding the potential for fire. For charcoal grills, be sure to let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

Heeding a few simple tips will ensure your family and home will be safe from fire while enjoying all the upcoming summer season has to offer, including the taste of homecooked barbeque!